ships is avoided. National Oil Spill Disaster Contingency Plan (NOSDCP) is in place, with Coast Guard as the National Coordinating Agency, to take care of the environmental and pollution hazards.

Foreign crew on Indian ships

486. SHRI EKANATH K. THAKUR: Will the Minister of SHIPPING be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are considering a proposal to allow employment of foreign crew on Indian ships; and

(b) if so, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF SHIPPING (SHRI T.R. BAALU): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

Inadequacy of Indian fleet

487. SHRI EKANATH K. THAKUR: Will the Minister of SHIPPING be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that in 2003-04, more than half the vessels chartered by his Ministry to carry cargo were of foreign origin indicating the utter inadequacy of the Indian fleet to support the country's trade;

(b) if so, whether this has adversely affected the freight earnings; and

(c) if so, the steps Government propose to take to deal with the inadequacy of Indian fleet in country's trade?

THE MINISTER OF SHIPPING (SHRI T.R. BAALU): (a) No Sir,

(b) Does not arise.

(c) The Government has been taking various steps from time to time for development/stabilization of the Shipping industry and to deal with the inadequacy of Indian fleet in the country's trade and also to compete in the international market. Some important measures taken are listed below:

(i) The most important and the foremost is that the Government has announced the introduction of Tonnage Tax for the Shipping industry with an option for the shipping companies to opt out of either tonnage tax or corporate tax. 20% of the book profits of the companies opting for tonnage tax scheme to be transferred to a separate reserve to be utilized for acquisition of vessels within 8 years;

(ii) Import of all types of ships have been included in the Open General License (OGL);

(iii) Ships (including second hand ships) can be imported freely now without license as per guidelines issued by the Ministry of Shipping on 15th June, 2001 and 5th March, 2002;

(iv) 100 per cent Foreign Direct Investment is allowed in shipping sector; and

(v) Enhancement of Depreciation rate from 20% to 25% for ships.

Dredging operation at Kolkata Port

488. SHRI PRASANTA CHATTERJEE: Will the Minister of SHIPPING be pleased to state:

(a) what was the target of dredging operation at the Kolkata Port Trust since 1995; amd

(b) the achievement thereof?

THE MINISTER OF SHIPPING (SHRI T.R. BAALU): (a) From 1995 to 2001, the annual targeted maintenance dredging quantum was 22 MM^3. Since 2001, the target is to maintain a minimum comfort level of 5 metres depth at Jellingham.

(b) The quantity dredged at Kolkata Port from 1995-96 to 2003-04 is as under: